Arthur Schlesinger's telling of the Bay of Pigs affair adds the sauce of first-hand White House reminiscence, though there is no reason to accept it (or Bissell's or Sorensen's) as more trustworthy concerning essentials than half a dozen serious accounts rendered earlier by outsiders—Charles Murphy's in *Fortune,* for example, Mario Lazo's in *Reader's Digest,* or Theodore Draper's. Schlesinger's writing of history has always been closer to pamphleteering than to science. This time, moreover, he must include his personal apologia in his *ex parte* brief; and you'll not be surprised to find, if you're reading the excerpts in *Life,* that he shows up pretty well alongside those louts from CIA, State and the Joint Chiefs. After it all was over, the Presidential confidant could find as cause for self-reproach only the modesty of "a college professor, fresh to government," that kept him too silent.

*A Thousand Days* is in the Roman, the imperial, mode. Its rhetorical purpose is to celebrate the reign and person of John F. Kennedy. Yet by a strange alchemical reversal, it is Kennedy who emerges worst from this Bay of Pigs re-enactment. Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell may have been mistaken (as Schlesinger reports the interventions), Dean Rusk empty, and the Joint Chiefs narrow-visioned; but the President just didn't measure up. Over five months (November to April) he couldn't make up his mind to call off the whole operation, or to support it on a basis that would give some chance of success. He wouldn't trust the Joint Chiefs, nor firmly over-rule them. He authorized what all the world knew to be U.S. acts, but called for "a 'quiet' landing" with plans drawn "on the basis of *no U.S. intervention*" (A. S.'s italics). He was naive in accepting intelligence reports that an alert newspaper reader would have known to be fanciful. While giving commands about complex military measures, he apparently didn't even look at the map. ("I don't think we fully realized that the Escambray Mountains lay 80 miles from the Bay of Pigs," states Schlesinger in a hair-raising sentence.) The collapse of Presidential will over the air support reads as dismally in this as in the other versions. And Kennedy's primary standing order—a real morale-booster, this one—was that "the expedition must be laid on in a way which would make it possible for him to call it off as late as 24 hours before D-Day."

John F. Kennedy is in his tragic grave, and we are willing that his flaws should be interred with his bones —so far, that is, as they were personal flaws. But as one reads the Schlesinger narrative, it becomes clear that these were not merely personal flaws, that Kennedy's indecisions, doubts, impossible compromises and fatal pull-backs correspond to a climate that pervaded Washington in those days and continues to have its effect on all inhabitants, right up to the First Citizen. The inordinate concern for World Opinion, the cultivated suspicion of "the military mind," the yielding to the enemy's bluff and bombast, the shrinking from unambiguous action resolutely carried out: we find these winds still blowing through the White House today, in spite of a commitment in Vietnam much beyond what, it would seem, Kennedy could have been capable of. Are these not the pressures that muzzle our planes and bombs, confining them to secondary, inadequate and often unsuitable tasks in Vietnam, and condemn our men to a costly and unpromising struggle, very largely on the enemy's terms?